



THE RENEGADE HERO CALLED STEEL vs.

THE

ALL-STAR SQUADRON

ALL NEW!
60¢

NO. 9
MAY

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY



**RING OF FIRE...
RING OF FEAR!**



THE MIGHTIEST COSTUMED HEROES OF
WORLD WAR TWO—BUNDLED TOGETHER
AS THE

ALL-STAR SQUADRON

GENTLEMEN, I'D
LIKE TO PROPOSE A
NEW YEAR'S TOAST—TO

**COMMANDER
STEEL!**

PLEASE,
SIR—I'D REALLY
RATHER YOU
DIDN'T—

GLADLY! THERE'S
NO MAN ON EARTH
I'D RATHER RAISE
MY GLASS TO
TONIGHT—

--NO, NOT
EVEN HIS MAJESTY
KING GEORGE IV
HIMSELF!

NEW YEAR'S EVE!
TRADITIONALLY, A TIME FOR
RHAPSODIZING ABOUT THE OLD,
EVEN WHILE RINGING IN THE NEW.

YET, IF THE SCENE WE ARE WITNESSING
IS ATYPICAL OF SUCH SPIRITED TOASTS,
BECAUSE OF THE MASKED, PATRIOTICALLY-
GARBED FIGURE BEING HONORED—

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SHOULD OLD ACQUAINTANCE BE *DESTROYED...*

"IT IS PERHAPS EVEN MORE
SO BECAUSE OF THOSE WHO
ARE DOING THE TOASTING:"

NO LESS THAN THE PRESIDENT
OF THE UNITED STATES...THE PRIME
MINISTER OF GREAT BRITAIN...AND
SEVEN BRIGHT-GARBED STALKERS
OF THE ALL-STAR SQUADRON!

A WORTHY
TOAST, MR.
PRESIDENT!

YET, THOUGH I DO VOUCH-
SAFE THAT IT BE WELL-EARNED,
I WAS *COMMANDER* OF OUR
NEWFOUND COMPEER'S
EXALTED MILITARY
RANK.

IF YOU MEAN THE
'COMMANDER STEEL' "
TITLE, SIR JUSTIN,
THAT'S BECAUSE I JUST
THOUGHT OF IT MYSELF...
BUT WHY NOT?

WHAT'S THE USE OF BEING
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, IF
I CAN'T EFFECT A BATTLE-
FIELD PROMOTION NOW
AND THEN, EH?

AS HANK HEYWOOD,
I'M ONLY A PRIVATE--
BUT NOW, AS STEEL,
I'M A--

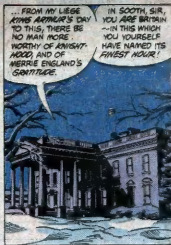
I'M AFRAID I
DON'T KNOW WHAT
TO SAY, MR.
PRESIDENT.

THEN LET ONE
WHO IS *HALF*
AMERICAN...NAMELY
MYSELF...FILL THE
CONVERSATIONAL GAP
WITH A SECOND AND
MORE GENERAL
TOAST...!

PLEASE
DO, MR. PRIME
MINISTER.

ROY THOMAS writer
ADRIAN & JERRY
GONZALES ORDMAN
artists

COSTANZA, CARL GIFFORD, LEN WEIN
letterer colorist editor
"STEEL" SEQUENCE BY
GERRY ORDMAN & DON HECK





NO OFFENSE, BUT I THINK WE'RE ALL IN DANGER OF BEING A BIT TOO MISTY-EYED FOR OUR OWN GOOD.

CONTRARY TO THIS FROZEN EXPRESSION AND THE METALLIC CLINK IN MY VOICE-- MY HUMAN BRAIN ISN'T IMMUNE EITHER, YOU KNOW.

MAYBE WE SHOULD HEAR FROM THE ROOM-- SINCE AS PVT. AL PRATT, HE'S DUE TO RETURN TO HIS TRAINING CORPS IN VIRGINIA IN A FEW DAYS, AND FROM THERE TO--

CAREFUL, METAL MAN...

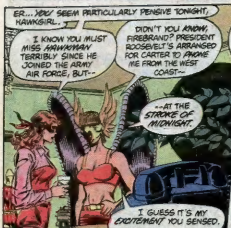


...YOU KNOW THAT KIND OF INFO IS CLASSIFIED.

WE ALL KNOW ALLIED DEFENSES ARE STRETCHED TOO THIN, WITH THE JAPANESE ATTACKING ON ALL FRONTS, TO SEND MORE THAN A *TOKEN* FORCE WEST...

...BUT WE'VE GOT TO TRY.

AIE, LAD.



ER... YOU SEEM PARTICULARLY PENSIVE TONIGHT, HAWKGIRL...

I KNOW YOU MUST MISS HAWKMAN TERRIBLY SINCE HE JOINED THE ARMY AIR FORCE, BUT--

DIDN'T YOU KNOW, FIREBRAND? PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S ARRANGED FOR CARTER TO PHONE ME FROM THE WEST COAST--

--AT THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT.

I GUESS IT'S MY EXCITEMENT YOU SENSED.



I'M SORRY, DANETTE. I DIDN'T MEAN TO PRATTLE ON SO. I KNOW YOU'RE STILL AWAITING WORD ON YOUR BROTHER ADD...

HOW WONDERFUL! I ONLY WISH ALL THOSE WE LOVE-- COULD--

...AND WHEN HE'LL BE RECOVERED ENOUGH TO BE SENT STATESIDE FROM PEARL HARBOR.



YOU KNOW I'D BE HAPPIER, MY YOUNG FRIEND, IF YOU STAYED HERE IN--

I WANT TO GO, SIR, I HAVE TO!

THEN YOU SHALL, OF COURSE.

BUT, IF THERE'S ANYTHING WE CAN DO FOR YOU BEFORE YOU LEAVE--



WELL, ACTUALLY, I'VE BEEN WILD TO HEAR THE REST OF STEEL'S STORY--

--WHAT HAPPENED AFTER HE AND TWO BRITISH COMMANDOS LANDED BEHIND NAZI LINES IN POLAND. #



AS WOULD WE ALL, ATOM-- BUT IF IT'S TOO PAINFUL FOR HIM TO RECOUNT, AT PRESENT--

WHAT OCCURRED AFTER MY LAST DIARY ENTRY -- HAS STARTED TO COME BACK TO ME, MR. PRESIDENT.

IT'S NOT A PLEASANT STORY-- BUT I THINK YOU DESERVE TO KNOW ALL OF IT! --

LAST ISSUE. --LEV.

"WE LANDED IN A FIELD NOT FAR FROM THE MAIN ROAD. WE WERE SUPPOSED TO JOIN UP WITH THE POLISH UNDERGROUND AT A SPOT A FEW KILOMETERS AWAY--"

"...BUT WHEN WE ARRIVED AT THE ROAD, WE FOUND--"

A GERMAN CONVOY HEADING EAST TO KÖNIGSBERG...



"WE FELL SILENT, LISTENING TO THE PASSING TRUCKS. AND WHEN THE LAST VEHICLE RUMBLED INTO THE DISTANCE..."

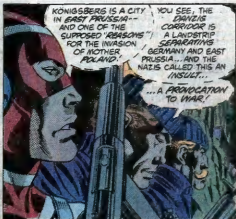


OKAY, THEY'RE GONE. LET'S GET OUT THE MAP AND FIND THIS CONCENTRATION CAMP OUR FRIEND HITLER'S PLANNING TO VISIT...

KÖNIGSBERG IS A CITY IN EAST PRUSSIA-- AND ONE OF THE SUPPOSED 'REASONS' FOR THE INVASION OF MOTHER POLAND!

YOU SEE, THE DANZIG CORRIDOR IS A LANDSTRIP SEPARATING GERMANY AND EAST PRUSSIA... AND THE NAZIS CALLED THIS AN INSULT...

...A PROVOCATION TO WAR!



RELAX, ANTONI. POLAND WILL BE FREE AGAIN, PERHAPS SOMEDAY SOON.

THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE, REMEMBER?



YOUR WORDS ARE KIND, AMERICAN, BUT IN MY HEART, I DOUBT MY LAND WILL EVER BE TRULY FREE AFTER THIS WAR...

"PAPER COINED, A FLASHLIGHT GLOWED, AND LUDCEK SPOKE IN A WHISPER..."

THERE, BELOW THE TOWN OF TOLKEN. I WAS BORN IN THIS COUNTRY.

I CAN LEAD YOU TO THE CAMP, EVEN IF OUR ALLIES IN THE RESISTANCE CANNOT.

BUT WHY IS HITLER VISITING THIS CAMP IN PARTICULAR?



THE CAMP COMMANDER IS AN OLD FRIEND OF THE FÜHRER'S THEY SAY!

HE'S 'AS BEEN TRYIN' TO LEARN THE BLOKE'S NAME, BUT IT'S ALL A BIG SECRET. 'E'S A MYSTERY-MAN, THIS CAMP COMMANDER.

ALL WE KNOW IS, 'E'S AS MEAN AS A MAD DOG, AND EVEN HITLER CALLS 'IM "EIN SCHLACHTER"!



--THE BUTCHER! AND THE NAME IS WELL-DESERVED, SCHWEIN!

AS YOU SHALL SURELY SOON DISCOVER!

FOOLS, TO BELIEVE OUR ALERT GERMAN SOLDIERS WOULD FAIL TO OBSERVE YOU--QUAKING IN A ROADSIDE DITCH!

ALREADY, WE HAVE DISAPPEARED OF YOUR COMRADES IN THE RESISTANCE, BUT WHILE THEY GAINED DEATH FOR THEIR TREACHERY--

--YOU SHALL BE SPARED FOR A MORE AMUSING FATE!

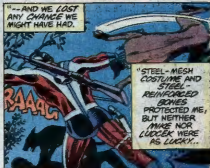
ACHTUNG! SEIZE THEM!



MISTER-- YOU GO TO HELL!

BR
AK
K
KCHLW

"THAT WAS THE BIGGEST FLAW IN THE NAZI MENTALITY -- A COCKSURE CONFIDENCE IN THEIR SUPERIORITY THAT BLINDED THEM..."



"IN MY NIGHTMARE, MEN STRIPPED
ME NAKED AND THREW ME IN A
MUDDY GRAVE, TO BE BURIED
ALIVE...

"THAT WAS THE NIGHTMARE,
BUT WHEN I MOVED, SPLASHED
AWAKE BY A BUCKETFUL OF
SLIMY WATER--

UNNNNNNN



"--I SAW TO MY HORROR--

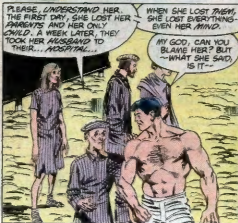
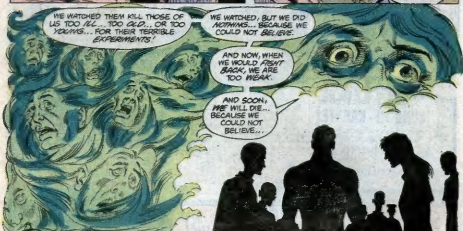
OH GOD



"--THE NIGHTMARE WAS REAL



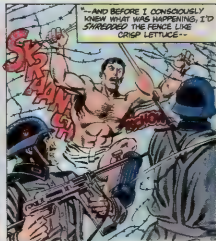
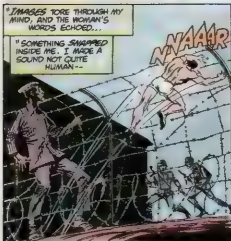
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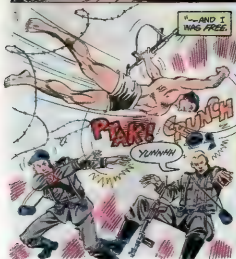


"IMAGES TORE THROUGH MY MIND, AND THE WOMAN'S WORDS ECHOED..."

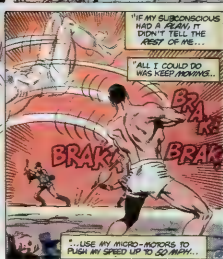
"SOMETHING SNAPPED INSIDE ME. I MADE A SOUND NOT QUITE HUMAN--"



"--AND BEFORE I CONSCIOUSLY KNEW WHAT WAS HAPPENING, I'D SHREPPED THE FENCE LIKE CRISP LETTUCE--"



"--AND I WAS FREE."



"IF MY SUBCONSCIOUS HAD A PLAN, IT DIDN'T TELL THE REST OF ME..."

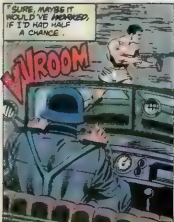
"ALL I COULD DO WAS KEEP MOVING..."

"...USE MY MICRO-MOTORS TO PUSH MY SPEED UP TO 50 MPH..."

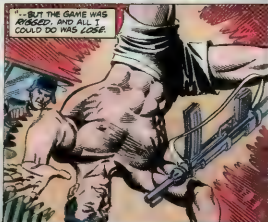
"FOR JUST A SECOND, I THOUGHT I'D MAKE IT ALL THE WAY TO THAT BUILDING WITH THE BIG, HYPOCRITICAL RED CROSS..."



"SURE, MAYBE IT WOULD'VE WORKED, IF I'D HAD HALF A CHANCE."



"...BUT THE GAME WAS RIGGED, AND ALL I COULD DO WAS LOSE."



"THIS TIME WHEN I WOKE, I EXPECTED A NIGHTMARE. I WASN'T DISAPPOINTED..."



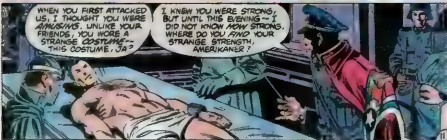
"ACH, SER GUT, MEHR DOKTOR. YOUR PATIENT RECOVERS CONSCIOUSNESS."

"THERE IS MUCH FOR WHICH HE MUST MAKE EXPLANATIONS, JA?"

"GO TO... HELL..."

"WHEN YOU FIRST ATTACKED US, I THOUGHT YOU WERE AMUSING. UNLIKE YOUR FRIENDS, YOU WORE A STRANGE COSTUME-- THIS COSTUME, JA?"

"I KNEW YOU WERE STRONG, BUT UNTIL THIS EVENING-- I DID NOT KNOW HOW STRONG. WHERE DO YOU FIND YOUR STRANGE STRENGTH, AMERIKANER?"



THIS MAN'S SKELETAL
STRUCTURE IS REINFORCED
STEEL... ONE LUNG IS
ARTIFICIAL... STRANGE
MICRO-MOTORS ENHANCE
HIS MUSCLES--

IN A WORD, HE IS
ALMOST MORE
MACHINE THAN
MAN

STRANGE... I REMEMBER A
MEDICAL CONFERENCE IN
MUNICH, BEFORE THE WAR
AN AMERICAN DOCTOR--
GILBERT GILES--
SUGGESTED THIS
POSSIBILITY.

WE
MOCKED
HIM FOR A
FOOL, BUT
NOW--

JA, JA, YOU
WERE HARKING.
THAT IS
OBVIOUS.

THIS UBER-SOLDAT
HAS POWERS WHICH
MUST BELONG
TO THE REICH!

GIVE ME A
THOUSAND
MEN LIKE THIS
-- AND THE
WORLD WILL
BE OURS!

I
WANT
ANSWERS,
HEER
DOCTOR.
THE
POWER IS
EXPECTED
WITHIN THE
NEXT 100
-- AGING HIS
PLEASURE
IF WE CAN--

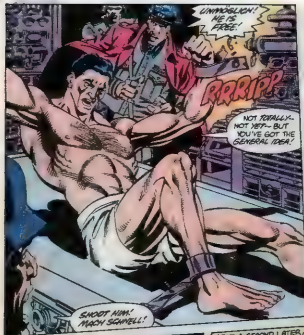
"THAT WAS ALL I
NEEDED TO HEAR
I GUESS..."

END?

KCANG

SPTANG

KRAAK



UNMORBLIN!
HE IS FREE!

RRRIIP!

NOT TOTALLY...
NOT YET-- BUT
YOU'VE GOT THE
GENERAL IDEA!

SHOOT HIM!
MARCH SCHWELL!



"NEXT MOMENT, BULLETS STRAFED
THE ROOM LIKE GRAPNEL FROM A
GRENADE...

CHARGE FIRE! HE IS
FAR TOO VALUABLE
TO KILL!

"THE GUARDS COULDN'T
HEAR HIM AS WELL AS
I COULD, THOUGH, SO
THEY KEPT BLASTING
AROUND--

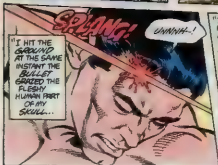
"--AS I DROVE FOR THE FLOOR,
SINCE WITHOUT MY MESH-ARMOR
COSTUME I'M ABOUT AS BULLET-
PROOF AS A LAUNDRY BAG.



"LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO
THROW, I GRABBED A BOTTLE
OF ACID--

SAUER

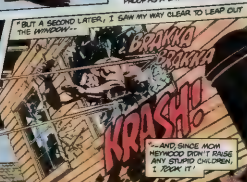
DULA
MUTER



SPANG!

UNNNH!

"I HIT THE
GROUND AT THE SAME
INSTANT THE
BULLET
GRAZED THE
FLESHY
HUMAN PART
OF MY
SKULL...

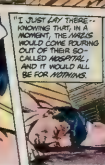


"BUT A SECOND LATER, I SAW MY WAY CLEAR TO LEAP OUT
THE WINDOW--

BRANNA
BRANNA

KRASH!

"--AND, SINCE MOM
HEYWOOD DIDN'T RAISE
ANY STUPID CHILDREN,
I TOOK IT!

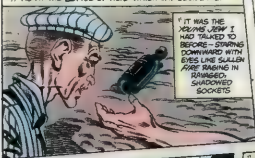


"I JUST LAY THERE--
KNOWING THAT, IN A
MOMENT, THE NAZIS
WOULD COME POURING
OUT OF THEIR SO-
CALLED HOSPITAL,
AND IT WOULD ALL
BE FOR NOTHING.



"THEN, I BECAME
AWARE OF SOMEONE
STANDING NEARBY--
JUST LOOKING DOWN,
NOT SO MUCH AT
ME...

... AS AT THE BOTTLE OF ACID WHICH LAY BESIDE ME.



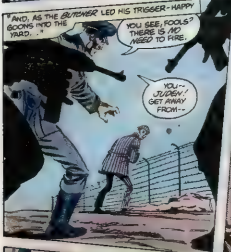
"IT WAS THE
X-RAYS JEW I
HAD TALKED TO
BEFORE-- STARRING
DOWNWARD WITH
EYES LIKE Sullen
FIRE RAGING IN
RANAGED,
SHADOWED
SOCKETS

"WITH AN EMACIATED HAND,
HE GRASPED THE BOTTLE--



"...AS IF, INSTINCTIVELY, HE
KNEW WHAT HE WAS GOING
TO DO WITH IT.

"AND, AS THE BUTCHER LED HIS TRIGGER-HAPPY
BOONS INTO THE
YARD, ...



"YOU SEE, FOOLS?
THERE IS NO
NEED TO FIRE.

"YOU--
JUDEN!
GET AWAY
FROM--

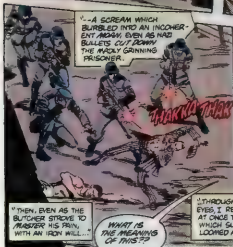
"...HE DID IT"



"A SPLATTER OF BREAK-
ING GLASS--A MISS--THEN
A SCREAM OF MORTAL
ANGUISH--

"--A SCREAM I'LL
NEVER FORGET, AS
LONG AS I LIVE--

"--A SCREAM WHICH
BURSTED INTO AN INCOHER-
ENT ANGLE, EVEN AS NAD
BULLETS CUT DOWN
THE MADLY GRINNING
PRISONER.



THANK YOU THANK

"...THE FACE OF THE VERY MAN I'D COME TO
OCCUPIED POLAND TO CAPTURE-- THE MONSTER
WHO WAS TEARING DOWN THE WORLD--



"--DER FLUNDER
HIMSELF--ADOLF
HITLER!

"THEN, EVEN AS THE
BUTCHER STROVE TO
MURDER HIS PRIN,
WITH AN IRON WILL...

"WHAT IS
THE MEANING
OF THIS?"

"THROUGH DIMMING
EYES, I RECOGNIZED
AT ONCE THE FACE
WHICH SUDDENLY
LOOKED ABOVE ME.

"I SCARCELY SAW S.G. CHIEF
HUMMER BEHIND HIM--AS I
LAPSED INTO A MERCFUL
UNCONSCIOUSNESS--

--AND, GOD HELP ME, THAT'S ALL I REMEMBER!

GOD'S BLOOD! YOUR TALE BE THE EQUAL OF ANY WHICH EVER MALLORY DID SPIN OF EXPLOITS AT CAMELOT, HANK HEYWOOD.

YET, NOW ON THIS GREEN EARTH COULD YOU HAVE--

--WOUND UP IN OTTAWA, SAVING THE PRIME MINISTER HERE FROM A *MAZE* KILLER, WITHOUT RECALLING HOW OR WHY I GOT THERE?

I WISH I *KNEW*, SHINING KNIGHT.

THE PLAIN FACT IS, THE NEXT THING I RECALL IS THE SIGHT OF THE "BLACK ASSASSIN" BLASTING AWAY AT MR CHURCHILL-- AND MY SLAMMING INTO HIM LIKE AN EXPRESS *(KNOCKS)*

FOR WHICH, COMMANDER STEEL, *BOTH* OUR NATIONS SHALL BE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL.

SURELY, SIR, AMERICAN DOCTORS WILL BE ABLE TO CURE HIS PARTIAL AMNESIA?

THEY'LL DO THEIR BEST, ROBOTMAN-- I PROMISE YOU THAT.

BUT NOW, THE OLD GRANDFATHER CLOCK SHOWS IT'S ONLY A MINUTE TILL MIDNIGHT.

I'M CERTAIN EACH OF US WOULD LIKE TO BE ALONE FOR A FEW MOMENTS, WITH HIS OR HER OWN PRIVATE THOUGHTS...

AND ALONE THEY ARE--NINE SOULS, GAZING OUTWARD AS IF THE FUTURE'S DARK SECRETS WERE HIDDEN BENEATH THE BEAUTIFUL BLANKET OF SNOW BEYOND THE WINDOW.

THE TENTH PERSON IN THE ROOM, HOWEVER, IS NOT NEARLY SO ALONE AS HE IMAGINES...

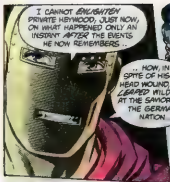
...AS, ELSEWHERE IN THE WARTIME NATION'S CAPITAL.

ANOTHER FEW MINUTES AT MOST, ZWERS--AND I SHALL HAVE HIM!

NOT THE TRIUMPH I HAD FIRST ENVISIONED, OF COURSE-- SLAYING ROOSEVELT WITH A ROBOT DOUBLED OF CHURCHILL, AND CARRYING CHURCHILL HIMSELF BACK WITH ME TO THE FATHERLAND, AND THE FURBER.

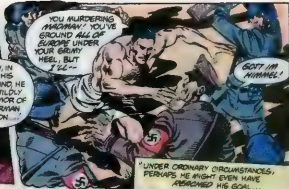
YET, THROUGH THIS DEVICE, WE HAVE SUCCEEDED TONIGHT IN *RAVENSPOUNTS* ON THE WHITE HOUSE ITSELF--AND SOON WE SHALL HEAR MY SECONDARY PLAN BEAR WELCOME FRUIT!

JAMONZ, BARON BLITZDRIES! /15



I CANNOT ENLIGHTEN PRIVATE HEYWOOD, JUST NOW, ON WHAT HAPPENED ONLY AN INSTANT AFTER THE EVENTS HE NOW REMEMBERS...

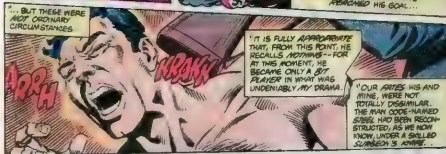
... NOW, IN SPITE OF HIS HEAD WOUND, HE LEAPED WILDLY AT THE SAVOR OF THE GERMAN NATION...



YOU MURDERING MADMAN! YOU'VE BROUGHT ALL OF EUROPE UNDER YOUR GRIMY HEEL, BUT I'LL--

SCOTCH HIM HIMSELF!

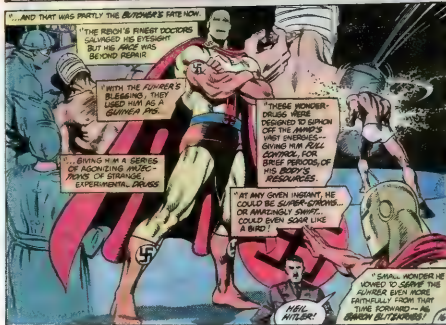
"UNDER ORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES, PERHAPS HE MIGHT EVEN HAVE REACHED HIS GOAL..."



... BUT THESE WERE NOT ORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

"IT IS FULLY APPROPRIATE THAT, FROM THIS POINT, HE RECALLS NOTHING--FOR AT THIS MOMENT, HE BECAME ONLY A BIT PLAYER IN WHAT WAS UNDENIABLY MY DRAMA.

"OUR ARTS HIS AND MINE, WERE NOT TOTALLY DISSIMILAR. THE MAN CODE-NAMED STEEL HAD BEEN RECONSTRUCTED, AS WE NOW KNOW, UNDER A SKILLED SURGEON'S KNIFE...



...AND THAT WAS PARTLY THE BUTCHER'S FATE NOW.

"THE REICH'S FINEST DOCTORS SALVAGED HIS EYESIGHT BUT HIS FACE WAS BEYOND REPAIR

"WITH THE FUHRER'S BLESSING, THEY USED HIM AS A GUINEA PIG.

"... GIVING HIM A SERIES OF AGONIZING INJECTIONS OF STRANGE, EXPERIMENTAL DRUGS

"THESE WONDER-DRUGS WERE DESIGNED TO SIPHON OFF THE ANIM'S VAST ENERGIES--GIVING HIM FULL CONTROL, FOR BRIEF PERIODS, OF HIS BODY'S RESOURCES.

"AT ANY GIVEN INSTANT, HE COULD BE SUPER-STRONG... OR AMAZINGLY SHYFT... COULD EVEN SOAR LIKE A BIRD!

"SMALL WONDER HE MOVED TO SERVE THE FUHRER EVEN MORE FAITHFULLY FROM THAT TIME FORWARD--AS HIS BORN BUTTERBREADS!

HEIL HITLER!

"MEANWHILE, STRIPPED OF HIS HATED UNIFORM, HANK HEYWOOD LANGUISHED IN A DARK CELL.

"DER FUHRER HAD ORDERED THAT HE BE WELL CARED FOR, AND NOT TORTURED, UNTIL I RECOVERED AND COULD DECIDE HIS FATE FOR MYSELF.

"DOUBTLESS HE SPENT LONG WEEKS CONTEMPLATING TORTURE AND DEATH...

"HE WAS BRUISING THEN, OF COURSE -- BY METHODS I MYSELF HAD BEEN PERFECTING, BEFORE THE VERDAMMT JEW'S ACTIONS HAD GIVEN ME OTHER PRIORITIES.

"AND FINALLY, FOR THE FIRST TIME, BARON BLITZKRIEG FACED THE MAN CALLED STEEL...

"YOU ARE STILL AWESOMELY IMPRESSIVE AS EVER, I SEE.

"HEAR ME, STEEL-- AND REMEMBER!

"YOU WILL RECALL NOTHING OF EVENTS SINCE YOUR CAPTURE NEARLY TWO YEARS AGO-- UNTIL ONE OF OUR AGENTS ACTIVATES YOU, IN THE NEW WORLD.

"WELL? SPEAK, HANK HEYWOOD! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

"I... UNDERSTAND, HERR BARON.

"AND YOU WILL OBEY?

"I... I...

"ANSWER ME! WILL YOU OBEY?"

"WELL, AMERIKANIER, THOUGH OUR SCIENTISTS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO Duplicate THE PROCESS WHICH HAS MADE YOU A VIRTUAL SUPER-MAN...

"... WE HAVE DECIDED YOU SHALL BE OUR BACK-UP METHOD OF ASSASSINATING CHURCHILL AND ROOSEVELT, WHO ARE BOUND TO CANFER TOGETHER, NOW THAT AMERICA HAS ENTERED THE WAR.

"YET, WHEN I WAS FULLY FUNCTIONAL...

"TO WHAT DO I owe THIS PLEASURE, MASKED MAN?

"THAT OUTFIT WON'T SCARE ME INTO TALKING-- THOUGH I MIGHT GIGGLE A LITTLE.

"TALK? WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY SAY THAT WOULD BE OF INTEREST TO US, PVT. HEYWOOD?

"OUR SPIES HAVE ALREADY LEARNED ENOUGH TO SHOW US HOW YOU MAY BE OF USE TO THE GREATER GERMAN REICH.

"AFTER THAT, YOU WILL BE YOURSELF UNTIL YOU HEAR THE WORDS: 'NOW BEGINS THE AGE OF CHAOS!'

"AT THAT TIME, YOU WILL USE ALL YOUR POWERS TO KILL CHURCHILL AND ROOSEVELT-- AND ANY WHO WOULD SEEK TO DEFEND THEM!

"I... WILL, HERR BARON.

"AMAZING! HIS WILL POWER IS NEARLY AS STRONG AS HIS METAL-REINFORCED BODY.

"I CAN SENSE THAT, AFTER HE HAS CARRIED OUT THAT COMMAND, HE WILL BE FREE OF MY INFLUENCE, AND ALL THE EFFECTS OF HIS BRAINWASHING REMOVED.

"BUT BY THEN, HE WILL DOUBTLESS HAVE BEEN EXECUTED-- FOR TREASON!

THEN, TO DATE, ALL
HAS GONE STRICKLY
ACCORDING TO YOUR
"PLAN B." HERR
BARON?

JA, ZWERS...
OR ALMOST
ALL

FROM MY MEXICAN STRONGHOLD,
I SENT MY AGENT, THE **BLACK
ASSASSIN**, NORTH TO CANADA--
WITH HANK HEYWOOD IN TOW.

MOMENTS BEFORE
HE MOVED TO SLAY
CHURCHILL, THE
ASSASSIN WAS ORDERED
TO BRING HEYWOOD
OUT OF HIS TRANCE.

I SUSPECTED THAT STEEL
WOULD BECOME A HERO
IF HE STOPPED THE
ASSASSIN, WHO WAS
DECIDEDLY EXPENDABLE.

THEN, HE WOULD
PROBABLY AT SOME
POINT GET THE CHANCE
TO BE IN THE GAME
ROOM WITH BOTH
CHURCHILL AND
ROOSEVELT-- AND
KILL THEM!

THAT WILL BE A
TRAGEDY FROM WHICH,
AT THIS PIVOTAL MOMENT
OF HISTORY, NEITHER
MAN'S NATION WILL FULLY
RECOVER-- AFFECTING
THE COURSE OF
THE WAR!



§ BOTH AXIS ASSAULTS
WERE CHRONICLED
LAST ISSUE. -- GEN.

THE JAPANESE-BORN
POOL AZNES NEARLY RUINED
THINGS BY ATTACKING
CHURCHILL ON HIS OWN
-- BUT STEEL MERELY
COVERED HIMSELF WITH
GLORY BY SAVING HIM
AGAIN. *

HOW I WISH I COULD
BE PRESENT TO SEE THE
ALL 'D LEADERS' STARTLED
RE: STONS WHEN HANK
HEYWOOD SUDDENLY LASHES
OUT AGAINST THEM...

NEAR DOES HE SUSPECT
THAT I CAN HEAR EVERY WORD
SAID IN HIS PRESENCE-- BY
MEANS OF A TINY DEVICE SURGICALLY
PLACED INSIDE HIS MENTAL
SKELETON.

... BUT I SHALL BE
CONTENT MERELY TO
HEAR THEIR DEATH AGONES
-- THE SONG OF BARON
BLITZKRIEG'S GREATEST
TRIUMPH!

IT'S NOT FAR AWAY,
ON PENNSYLVANIA
AVENUE...

I'LL GET
IT, MY
FRIENDS

IT'S RIGHT ON TIME,
TOO! I WAS AFRAID
IT WOULDN'T BE, WHAT
WITH PRIORITY
PRIORITIES AND
ALL...

IT SEEMS TO BE
FOR YOU, LITTLE
LADY

I-I'VE BEEN WAITING
FOR THIS CALL ALL
EVENINGS--AND NOW,
I DON'T KNOW
WHAT TO
SAY!

RING

OH, I'M
SURE
YOU'LL
THINK OF
SOMETHING

WE ALWAYS
DO, DON'T WE,
WINSTON?

HELLO, CARTER? THIS IS
SHIERA, DARLING!

AND NOW'S
MY FAVORITE FINANCE
DOING THIS FINE NEW
YEAR'S EVE?

NEVER
BITTER--NOW
THAT I HEAR
YOUR VOICE.

PRIME MINISTER
CHURCHILL'S HERE--AND
SO MANY OF OUR FRIENDS
FROM THE ALL-STAR
SQUADRON.

WHERE ARE YOU
CALLING FROM,
DARLING? THE
PRESIDENT DIDN'T--

OH, LET'S JUST
SAY--

--I'M UP
A TREE,
MORE OR
LESS, NOT
FAR FROM
FRISCO.

LISTEN, HONEY, THE
CODED MESSAGE I
GOT ABOUT THIS CALL
SAID WE'D HAVE TO
KEEP IT SHORT...
BUT JUST IN CASE
WE GET CUT
OFF...

...I LOVE YOU, AND
DON'T STAND UNDER
THE MISTLETOE WITH
TOO MANY PEOPLE
BESIDES ME, OKAY?

WHAT'S THAT
SHIERA? I CAN'T
HEAR YOU TOO
WELL, ALL OF A
SUDDEN...

I'VE PATCHED
INTO A TELEPHONE
LINE, AND THE
GOVERNMENT'S
TAKING CARE OF
THE REST.

YOU CAN TELL THE
PRESIDENT THAT, FOR
MY MONEY, THIS IS
THE GREATEST THING
HE'S DONE SINCE
SOCIAL SECURITY.

BONG

IT'S THE CLOCK
STARTING TO STRIKE
TWELVE, DARLING.
AND I LOVE YOU,
TOO

TELL 'EM HI, FOR
US, HUH?

BONG



THE ARMY
ASKED ME TO--
EH?

WHO
IS
THIS?
I WAS JUST--



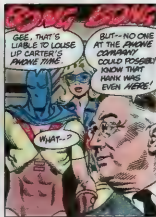
YES,
ALL RIGHT...
JUST A
MOMENT.



STEEL...
IT'S FOR
YOU.

ME?

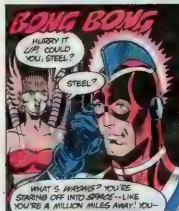
THE PHONE
COMPANY CUT
IN--ASKED TO
SPEAK TO YOU.



GEE, THAT'S
LIABLE TO LOUSE
UP CARTER'S
PHONE TIME.

BUT--NO ONE
AT THE PHONE
COMPANY
COULD POSSIBLY
KNOW THAT
HANK WAS
EVEN HERE!

WHAT--?



HURRY IT
UP, COULD
YOU, STEEL?

STEEL?

WHAT'S WARMING? YOU'RE
STARTING OFF INTO SPACE--LIKE
YOU'RE A MILLION MILES AWAY! YOU--



JOHNNY! GET THE
PRESIDENT AND THE
PRIME MINISTER OUT
OF HERE--ON THE
DOUBLE!

AHH? WHAT'S GOT
STUCK IN YOUR
CRAW ALL OF A
SUDDEN, BELLE?

LISTEN HERE--
IF SOMETHING'S
HAPPENING,
YOUNG LADY, I
WANT TO BE IN ON IT!

PERHAPS WE'D
BEST DO AS SHE
SAYS, JOHNNY.

I'VE FOUND LIBERTY
BELLE'S INSTINCT TO BE
ALMOST FLAWLESS.



NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT,
MR. PRESIDENT--SO HAVE I!

IN WHICH CASE,
I'LL JUST HUSTLE
YOU TWO OFF TO A
SAFE SPOT--
THEN HOTFOOT IT
BACK HERE TO
LEARN WHAT'S
GOING ON.

YOU WON'T
HAVE TO WAIT
THAT LONG,
JOHNNY QUICK--



--BECAUSE I'M
TAKING THEM OFF
YOUR HANDS--
AS OF NOW!

HEY!
WHAT'S THE
--COOF!

GOOD
GRAVY!
HE KNOCKED
THE ARMY
FOR A GOOD

SOMETHING'S
WARMING WITH HEYWOOD,
ALL RIGHT--DEAD WRONG!



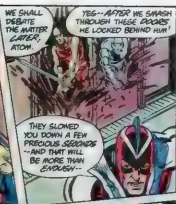
HE'S ~~LEAVING~~ THE OTHER ALL-
STARS--CHARGING
DOWN THE HALL
AFTER US!

HE'S FAST--
AND THERE'S
NO WAY I CAN
GET UP MUCH
SPEED IN HERE.



STOP HIM! BELLE
WAS RIGHT--HE
MEANS TO KILL
THEM ALL!

BUT THAT'S
IMPOSSIBLE
--ISN'T IT?



WE SHALL
DEBATE
THE MATTER
LATER,
ATOM.

THEY SLOWED
YOU DOWN A FEW
PRECIOUS SECONDS
--AND THAT WILL
BE MORE THAN
ENOUGH--



--FOR ME TO DO
WHAT I **MUST** DO,
AND LEAVE AMERICAN
AND BRITAIN
LEADERLESS!

TO DO THAT,
YOU'LL HAVE TO
GET PAST JENNY
QUICK FIRST, PAL--
AND I'LL CLUE
YOU IN RIGHT
NOW--



--YOU'RE
NOT GOING!



JUST HOLD
STILL A MINUTE,
WHILE I SERVE
UP SOME **NEW**
YEAR'S PUNCH,
AND--



YOU
FORGET,
QUICK--



YOU HITTING
ME PROBABLY
HURTS YOU
MORE THAN
IT HURTS ME--



--BUT ME HITTING
YOU IS SOMETHING
ELSE AGAIN!

HE'S NOT KIDDING!
IT'S LIKE HE'S GOT
SPRING KNUCKLES--ONLY INSIDE
HIS FIST, AS WELL AS OUTSIDE!



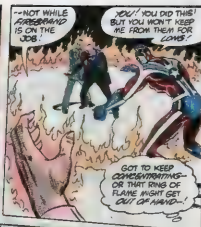
KEEP BACK, HEYWOOD!
YOU'RE NOT A NAZI
ASSASSIN! THINK,
MAN!

HE'S UNDER
SOMEONE'S
CONTROL!

COMING
FOR US--!



BUT HE'LL
NEVER REACH
YOU, MR. PRIME
MINISTER--



--NOT WHILE
FIREBRAND
IS ON THE
JOB!

YOU! YOU DID THIS!
BUT YOU WON'T KEEP
ME FROM THEM FOR
LONGS!

GOT TO KEEP
CONCENTRATING--
OR THAT RING OF
FLAME MIGHT GET
OUT OF HAND--!



STOP HIM,
SOMEBODY! HE
SLUGGED
FIREBRAND!

LADY, WE'RE
GONNA GET HIM
IN SARGES!

NO--WAIT, ALL! TRULY, HE
IS ENCHANTED SOMEHOW!

WE MUST NEEDS FIND
THE KEY THAT WILL RE-
LEASE HIM FROM THE SPELL!



YOU TRY PHONING
THE WICED WITCH
OF THE WEST, LANCELOT!
ME, I'M GOING TO
LUNKIN'!



IS THIS THE BEST YOU CAN SEND
AGAINST ME, ALL-STARS?

NOT QUITE,
STEEL!

NEVER
REALIZED--
JUST HOW
SOLID
HE'S BUILT!

OH GREAT!
NOW HE'S
SLAMMED ME
INTO BELLS,
TO BOOT!

YOU KNOW, FELLA,
I'VE BEEN KIND A
MEMBER WHICH
OF US WAS
STRENGTH-- AND
THIS LOOKS LIKE
AS GOOD A TIME
AS ANY TO FIND
OUT!

I AM, ROBOT--
AND I'M
ABOUT TO
PROVE IT
TO YOU--

--BY TEARING
YOU LIMBS FROM
MECHANICAL LIMBS!

NOW, FISTS WHOSE FLESH
COVERS SINKERS OF HARD METAL--
WHOSE VERY SKIN IS COVERED
BY A FINE METALLIC MESH--
STRIKE A JAW MADE ENTIRELY
OF STRONGEST STEEL--

--AND THAT CLENCHED
HAND WOULD PROBABLY
FEEL EXORCISING PAIN,
IF IT HAD NOT BEEN
SPECIALLY RECONSTRUCTED
BY THE FORMULAS OF
HANK HAYWOOD AND DR.
GILES GILBERT--

NOR WOULD MOST HUMAN
JAWS WITHSTAND THE SHATTER-
ING IMPACT OF COMMANDER
STEEL'S FISTS-- BUT THIS IS
ROBOTMAN--

--AND HIS FISTS ARE,
IF ANYTHING, EVEN
MORE POWERFUL THAN
THOSE OF HIS MORE
MORTAL FOE!

BACK AND
FORTH SEEDS
THE EPIC
BATTLE--HANK
HAYWOOD'S
SUPERHUMAN
ABILITY
COMPENSATING
IN PART FOR
ROBOTMAN'S
GREATER
MASS--

--IN PART,
BUT NOT
ENTIRELY.

FOR, IF ONE MAN IS IN THE SECRET GRIP OF
BARON BLITZKRIEG, THE OTHER FIGHTS FOR
THE LIVES OF TWO OF THE FREE WORLD'S
GREATEST LEADERS--

AND SO, ROBOTMAN STRIVES AS NEVER BEFORE,
AGAINST AN OPPONENT FAR MORE FEARFUL
THAN ANY HE HAS Faced IN HIS BRIEF CAREER.

SEE
STEEL #1.
-- LBY.

IMPOSSIBLE!
I SHOULD BE
ABLE TO STOP
HIM COLD--
BUT I CAN'T!



SUDDENLY, HE SEEMED
TO START GROWING
STRONGER, MOMENT BY
MOMENT-- AND HE WAS
A TOUGH CUSTOMER
BEFORE!



AND, THAT AND
GLEAM IN HIS
EYES-- IT'S NOT
HANK HEYWOOD'S!

SOMEONE CONTROLLING
HIM SOMEHOW-- FEELS
HIM POWER!



BUT WHO--
AND
HOW??

--AND AS FOR
THE NOW--!

THE MAN CALLED
STEEL IS ARMORABLE--
YET AGAINST ROBOT-
MAN AND THE OTHERS,
EVEN HE IS OVER-
MATCHED!

BUT I AM CAPABLE
OF FOCUSING ALL MY
WASTED BODY ENERGY
AS I WILL-- WHERE
I WILL--

--EVEN
ACROSS DISTANCE,
BECAUSE OF MY
POWER PLACED
IN HIS METAL
SKELETON!

BUT, HERR
BARON-- IS THAT
NOT DANGER-
OUS?



THERE IS NO
DANGER-- I WILL NOT
BRAVE-- TO DO
DER FUEHRER'S
BIDDING!

SILENCE NOW,
ENERG! FOR
ONLY A FEW
SECONDS MORE CAN
I REMAIN MENTALLY
AT ONE WITH MY
LIVING WEAPON!

ALAS, HOWEVER, THE BARON'S
TIMING IS A LITTLE BIT OFF,
AS--

GOOD
LORD! STEEL'S
HURTLER ROBOT-
MAN ASIDE!



AVERTING HIS HEAD,
HANK HEYWOOD IS STRUCK
ONLY IN HIS MESH-
METAL MASK--

--AND THOUGH HE CAN
STAND BOTH IMPACT
AND HEAT--

IF THIS FLAMEBALL
DOESN'T STOP HIM-- HE'LL
BE THROUGH US LIKE PANCERS
THROUGH AUSTRIA!

--BARON
BLITZKRIEGS
CANNOT!

NEITHER MAN IS
TRULY BURNED--
YET THE NAZI
AGENT IS ONE
WHOSE STRONGEST
MEMORY IS OF
A VIAL OF HURT-
LING ACID SEAR-
ING HIS FACE,
DESTROYING HIS
SIGHT--



--AND IS IT NOT THE
MIND, AFTER ALL, WHICH
IS MOST SUSCEPTIBLE TO
MIND-SMATTERING
RAIN?

M-MY BRAIN--IT'S ON FIRE! AND--I'M BLINDED!

CAN'T SEE--CAN'T EVEN THINK CLEARLY--!

MEIN GOTT, DON'T LET ME GO THROUGH THAT HELL--NOT AGAIN!

WHILE BARON BLITZARES IS THUS DISTRACTED...

WHAT'S HAPPENING?? I FEEL SO STRANGE--DIZZY--!

YOU WON'T BE FEELING ANYTHING, STEEL, WHEN I GET THROUGH WITH YOU!

HUH? ROBOTMAN--WHY ARE YOU LOOKING OVER ME LIKE THAT?

WH-WHERE AM I? HOW DID I GET IN THIS RING OF FIRE?

STOP, ROBOTMAN! DON'T YOU SEE?

HE'S BACK TO BEING HIMSELF NOW!

MYSELF? I--DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, BELLE.

I REMEMBER THE CLOCK STARTING TO STRIKE TWELVE, AND THEN--NOTHING!

MAYBE I SHOULDN'T, BUDDY--BUT I'M GOING TO TRY BELIEVING YOU.

WELCOME BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING! JUST DON'T MAKE ANY SUDDEN MOVES FOR A MINUTE, OKAY?

I'LL DRAW ALL THE FLAMES BACK INTO MYSELF, NOW THAT IT'S ALL OVER.

HOW ARE ATOM--AND JOHNNY QUICK?

ATOM'S FINE, AND JOHNNY--

JUST A NASTY BUMP ON MY HEAD, LADY. WHY DON'T YOU KISS IT AND MAKE IT WELL?

--IS BACK TO NORMAL.

THIS, WITHIN MOMENTS...

LOST MY GAIL--BUT THANK HEAVEN YOUR FLAMEBALL DID... WHATEVER IT DID, FIREBRAND.

I DON'T THINK SHE CAN HEAR YOU JUST NOW, HAWK-GIRL.

IT'S NEW YEAR'S, REMEMBER? NOW, BELLE... ABOUT THAT KISS...

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT... WHY NOT?

THIS CLOSE DOES HARD-NOB THURMAN EVER SEEM STARK TENSED... 25

YET, THOSE WHO LIVE IN THESE DARK DAYS ON THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS ARE BRAVE MEN, COURAGEOUS WOMEN... AND, LIKE A WELL-TRAINED COMBAT UNIT, THEY QUICKLY RECOVER THE GOOD SPIRITS SO NECESSARY TO THEIR VERY SANITY...

PERHAPS WE'D BEST COMPLETE OUR STRATEGIC TALKS SOON, MR. PRESIDENT, SO I MAY RETURN TO LONDON...

...AND THESE EIGHT STALWARTS CAN FIND TIME TO DO OTHER THINGS FOR THE ALLIED NATIONS THAN KEEP RESCUING US.

YOU'VE A POINT THERE, MR. PRIME MINISTER.

REST ASSURED, GENTLEMEN, THERE'S NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT EITHER TO US... OR TO THE ALLIES.

YOU SEEM FULLY RECOVERED, HEYWOOD... BUT MAYBE I'D BETTER CHECK OUT THAT METAL INFRA-STRUCTURE OF YOURS TOMORROW.

AFTER ALL, I'VE HAD SOME LIMITED EXPERIENCE IN THAT AREA.

GLAREY! IT MUST HAVE BEEN ~~BARON BLITZKOPF~~ CONTROLLING ME--USING ME--THOUGH I FEEL FREE OF HIM NOW.

STILL, NONE OF US WILL REST EASY--UNTIL WE'RE CERTAIN.

OH YES-- AND HAPPY NEW YEAR, ALL!

AND WHAT OF THE GOOD BARON HIMSELF...?

ZWERS...ZWERS!...

I AM HERE, HERR BARON.

H-HELP ME, ZWERS... DON'T LEAVE ME...

NEVER, HERR BARON. WHAT IS--?

IT'S...SO DARK IN HERE... CAN'T SEE! PLEASE--TURN ON THE LIGHTS...!

THEY ARE ON, HERR BARON. YOU WILL RECOVER SOON, FOR YOUR EYES ARE UNHARMED. IT IS ALL IN YOUR MIND!

PROMISE ME, THERE... PROMISE ME I WILL SEE AGAIN!

I PROMISE, HERR BARON.

YOU SHALL SEE AGAIN--AND ON THAT DAY, WE'LL STRIKE LIKE LIGHTNING IN THE NIGHT, YOU AND I--

--AND SMASH THE ALLIES AND THEIR HATED ALL-STAR SQUADRON, FOR ALL TIME!

BUT FOR NOW...YOU MUST SLEEP!...

NEXT ISSUE:
IT CAME FROM THE STARS--
INTO A
WORLD AT WAR!